

Army Corps monitoring northwest rivers

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SEATTLE— The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Seattle District, emergency management teams have been alerted and are watching and monitoring river conditions in Washington, northern Idaho and western Montana in advance of the predicted warm temperatures.

"We have the potential for flooding, mostly in eastern Washington, northern Idaho and western Montana," said Larry Schick, Seattle District meteorologist.

"No major flooding is expected in western Washington. Expect high snowmelt flows with swift and cold water in most streams. Minor nuisance flooding is possible. Historically, western Washington and western Oregon have never seen a major flood from spring snowmelt," said Schick.

Public safety is a primary concern of the Corps. "No matter where you are, if you are in, near or around a river you need to be aware that the warmer temperatures will bring rising river levels, and in some cases, quickly rising levels," said Schick.

According to Paul Komoroske, chief of Emergency Management at the Corps' office in Seattle, besides the rising river levels, the melting snowpack can bring debris with it that can affect levees, block drainages and cause roads and areas to flood.

"The Corps has a seasoned team of emergency responders that assist in floods and natural disasters," said Komoroske. The Corps is preparing to send out advance teams of flood fight personnel to northern Idaho and western Montana.

The Corps been requested by the governor of Idaho to provide technical assistance. The Corps is working with local and state emergency managers to determine what type of assistance can be provided. Public Law 84-99 enables the Corps to assist state and local authorities in flood fight activities and cost share in the repair of flood protection structures.

The Corps can provide technical assistance before, during, and after flood events. This assistance can range from how to place sandbags to helping design a permanent flood control structure.

Hydrologists with the Seattle District Reservoir Control Center are also monitoring river conditions. In a flood emergency the center is activated and on 24-hour shifts, managing flood control operation for Washington rivers. The Seattle District Reservoir Control Center manages and regulates five dams during times of floods -- Mud Mountain and Howard Hanson, both located near Enumclaw, Wash.; Ross and Upper Baker on the Skagit River; and Wynoochee Dam on the Wynoochee River. At this time, the Corps does not expect to regulate for flood control in western Washington.

Chief Joseph Dam near Brewster, Wash., Albeni Falls Dam near Newport, Wash., and Libby Dam in Montana are operated by the Corps' Northwestern Division Reservoir Control Center.

For more information on the Corps, and up-to-date river forecasts, go to www.nws.usace.army.mil and click on Rivers and Reservoirs or call the RCC at (206) 764-6702. The Corps has a 24 hour recorded information toll free line that is updated during emergencies at (866) 596-2635.

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